



Horsemen's Council of Illinois

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Member of the
AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL

Testimony for Frank S. Bowman

Horsemen's Council of Illinois

U.S. House of Representatives
House Agriculture Committee
Room 1300 – Longworth House Office Building
Thursday, July 27, 2006, 9:30 a.m.

Nobody here today stands in opposition to animal welfare and the humane treatment of horses or any other livestock throughout their entire life cycle. Nobody disputes the horse's important role in battle and exploration throughout history. I'm certainly not here to argue the burden that horses have carried for mankind in the making of this great country, but I am here to oppose the prohibition considered in **HR 503** and to discuss the inability of state and local governments to meet the challenge imposed by its passage.

The issue of horse slaughter is extremely divisive for the horse community and in my position as President of the Horsemen's Council of Illinois I have been on the front line in planning sessions and meetings with equine professionals, horse owners and industry leaders from across Illinois, and across the country on this issue. Discussions on horse slaughter always bring out the full range of emotions you would expect in similar discussions on capital punishment or even abortion.

However, the prohibition considered in **HR 503** is not about providing protections for family pets or derby winners. It's not about preserving a piece of American history, a child's joy, or the wind in your hair. **HR 503** seeks to remove a humane tool used to manage the overall health of the national horse herd. **HR 503** begins a paradigm shift in property rights as they apply to all livestock. When you strip away all the emotion ***HR 503 is about animal rights, not animal welfare.***

As you know, there is an enormous difference between animal "welfare" laws, which seek to protect and enhance the humane treatment of animals, and animal "rights" laws, which seek to give legal standing and end the beneficial use, enjoyment and ownership of animals. **HR 503** is an obvious animal rights bill and will not benefit or enhance animal welfare in the United States.

There are **no fundable alternatives** presented in the bill. There is **no oversight provision** in the bill proposed for managing the growing number of equine rescue and retirement facilities cropping up all across the country. There is no support extended for the many state and local agencies that will face the challenge and bear the cost for housing abandoned and unadoptable horses. Nor are there any programs proposed or created for the education of horse owners or population control measures such as spay and castration assistance through local veterinarians and animal shelters aimed at the cause.

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The majority of horse owners are not wealthy landholders. The average horse owner in the US typically has one to three horses on a large suburban lot or a small acreage, mainly for recreation. Many are just treading above water financially, some aren't doing that well, but they all love their horses and their chosen equestrian lifestyle. It is our fear that through the prohibition in **HR 503** the lower end, the unemployable and the otherwise unwanted animals which have historically been harvested through slaughter may suffer increased neglect and begin to place an additional burden on state and local governments, humane societies and animal shelters which are simply incapable of taking on the responsibility for more than 70,000 unwanted horses every year.

Through this legislation some horse owners who, for whatever reason, can no longer afford to properly feed their animals, provide for needed veterinary care, pay for euthanasia and burial or have no ability to sell the animal quickly through private treaty, may also lose the ability to divest themselves of the animal through a livestock auction. It is my concern that such owners may simply decide to cut their losses and turn the horses loose to graze on public lands and in national forests thereby adding to the burden for government agencies, including USDA and BLM.

HR503 is not a free vote. There are nearly 2 million horse owners in the US who will be affected by your decision on this issue. Nearly every state and local government will feel the far-reaching effects of this legislation if passed. The future minimum value of horses as livestock hangs in the balance here today as well.

Please join us, and nearly every professional equine and livestock organization across the country, in our efforts to promote responsible breeding, developing alternatives to slaughter and educating horse owners to the responsibility they have for the welfare of their animals. Help us bring the general public to understand the joys of interacting with horses. Let's work toward the ultimate welfare of our horses... not legislating prohibitions through unfunded mandates and taking property rights. I urge you to **VOTE NO on HR 503.**



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Frank S. Bowman - Biography

Frank Bowman raises hay, saddle horses and grass fed beef on a 5th generation family farm along the Sangamon River outside Springfield, IL. A graduate of Colorado State University, Frank has ridden most of the Rocky Mountain West on horseback, serving for a time as Planning Director for Park County Colorado, where there are far more public lands than private and a major shift from ranching to recreational land ownership. He has been President of the Horsemen's Council of Illinois (HCI) for the past six years and on the Board of Directors for the last ten. He serves as Chairman of the Issues Committee for the American Horse Council's State Horse Council Advisory Committee. Frank's also a member of the Board of Directors for Region Six of the North American Trail Riding Conference (NATRC), manages events and competes in competitive trail riding when time allows. His day job as Vice President of a commercial construction company in the Springfield area permits him to continue farming and pursuing his interests in horses and agriculture. When he's not working young horses or out trail riding Frank can occasionally be found evangelizing the need for responsible horse ownership at equine functions across the Midwest. He understands the ever increasing need to share trails, ride smart and to focus attention on preserving the overall health, welfare and economic future of the horse in Illinois.



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